



Aalborg Universitet

AALBORG UNIVERSITY  
DENMARK

## Health and sickness absence among immigrants in Denmark

*the cleaning sector in perspective*

Carneiro, Isabella G.; Rasmussen, Charlotte D. N.; Jørgensen, Marie B.; Flyvholm, Mari-Ann; Olesen, Kasper; Madeleine, Pascal; Ekner, Dorte; Søgaard, Karen; Holtermann, Andreas

*Publication date:*  
2011

*Document Version*  
Accepted author manuscript, peer reviewed version

[Link to publication from Aalborg University](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*

Carneiro, I. G., Rasmussen, C. D. N., Jørgensen, M. B., Flyvholm, M-A., Olesen, K., Madeleine, P., Ekner, D., Søgaard, K., & Holtermann, A. (2011). *Health and sickness absence among immigrants in Denmark: the cleaning sector in perspective*. Abstract from MSU Symposium on Multicultural Psychology, East Lansing, MI, United States.

### General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal -

### Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us at [vbn@aub.aau.dk](mailto:vbn@aub.aau.dk) providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

## POSTER PRESENTATION

Title: Health and sickness absence among immigrants in Denmark: the cleaning sector in perspective

Authors: Isabella G. Carneiro<sup>1</sup>, Charlotte D. N. Rasmussen<sup>1</sup>, Marie B. Jørgensen<sup>1</sup>, Mari-Ann Flyvholm<sup>1</sup>, Kasper Olesen<sup>1</sup>, Pascal Madeleine<sup>3</sup>, Dorte Ekner<sup>1</sup>, Karen Søgaard<sup>2</sup>, Andreas Holtermann<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> National Research Centre for the Working Environment, Copenhagen, Denmark

<sup>2</sup> University of Southern Denmark, Odense, Denmark

<sup>3</sup> Aalborg University, Aalborg, Denmark

Background: Previous studies in Denmark and in other Scandinavian countries have shown that immigrants report poorer health than native Danes (Jørgensen, MB et al., 2011; Gadd et al. 2006). Studies related to health have increasingly focused on sickness absence due to the associated large economical, social, organizational and personal costs. It is particularly interesting to look into the relationship between health and sickness absence from an ethnic perspective within a job sector that traditionally employ a large fraction of workers with a non native background.

Purpose: The objective of the study was to investigate the association between health and sickness absence among natives and immigrant cleaners in Denmark.

Methods: This study is based on a cross-sectional analysis of baseline data from 2007-2008. The final population includes 276 cleaners, 144 Danes and 132 non-Western immigrants. Cumulative sickness absences from administrative records were subdivided into no sickness absence (0 days), low sickness absence (1-10 days) and high sickness absence (over 10 days) in a 6-month-period. Different measures of health were collected both through self-reported data and objective measurements, such as self-reported health, blood pressure and doctor-diagnosed chronic illness. The relationship between sickness absence and health was analyzed through multinomial logistic regression, stratified by Danes and non-Western immigrants, where the reference category was no sickness absence.

Results: There was no significant difference in the average number of sickness absent days between Danes (on average 5 days) and non-Western immigrants (on average 7 days). However, slightly more Danes experienced low sickness absence (55% compared to 54% among immigrants) while more immigrants experienced high sickness absence (16% compared to 12% among Danes). There was no significant association between low sickness absence and health in general, neither among native

Danes or immigrant cleaners, while high sickness absence for both groups was significantly related to poor self-reported health. High blood pressure was related to high sickness absence only among Danes, while the presence of at least 1 self-reported doctor-diagnosed chronic disease was related to high sickness absence only among immigrants.

Conclusion: Our findings indicate a relationship between health and high sickness absence. Therefore, investments in preventive initiatives tailored to reduce chronic diseases among immigrants and hypertension among Danes are suggested as such efforts could diminish high sickness absence, and some of the large costs related to it.

#### References:

. Gadd M, Johansson SE, Sundquist J, Wändell P (2006) Are there differences in all-cause and coronary heart disease mortality between immigrants in Sweden and in their country of birth? A follow-up study of total population. *BMC Public Health* 6:102

. Jørgensen MB, Rasmussen CD, Carneiro IG, Flyvholm M-A, Olesen K, Ekner D, Søgaaard K, Holtermann A (2011) Health disparities between immigrants and Danish cleaners. *Int Arch Occup Environ Health* doi:10.1007/s00420-020-0607-2 (E-pub ahead of print)